

Established in 1988, Aakash Educational Services Private Limited (AESPL) prepares students for medical and engineering entrance tests. The coaching centre has taken the lead in adopting technology to reach out to a wider section of students through concepts such as virtual classrooms and online exams. Aakash Chaudhary, director, AESPL, talks about the telecom set-up of the organization, mobility solutions being used, challenges in deploying new technologies and the coaching centre's future IT blueprint. Excerpts...

What does Aakash's current telecom and IT set-up comprise?

Aakash's IT infrastructure comprises a mix of platforms. The IT set-up includes an active in-house data centre, an auto backup solution and a development team. The data centre set-up is equipped with an application layer and hardware redundancy for business applications. Our website applications are hosted on the cloud with secured encryption.

On the telecom front, the infrastructure set-up is in the active and standby modes. Our telecom set-up is a mix of base and cloud-based IP telephony. We have an automatic call distribution application that maximises routing and resource selection, thereby allowing our call centre to handle calls more effectively and improving overall productivity. Virtual call routing allows businesses with multiple centres to maximise resource utilisation across all our centre locations.

Aakash's IT infrastructure consists of an internet service provider and a network system; we also have a multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) segment in the network. MPLS is a scalable, protocol-independent transport network that enables high-performance data transfers from one network node to the next, based on short path labels rather than long network addresses, avoiding complex lookups in a routing table.

What are the mobility/enterprise solutions deployed by the organisation?

Aakash has an in-house developed solution to meet its business requirements. We are implementing PeopleSoft ERP as the core enterprise resource planning system for Student

Campus Solutions with student self-service and PeopleSoft Finance Solutions to improve productivity and user experience.

On the mobility front, we have billing solutions (Android based), Student Online Test Platform (Android and iOS), and a tablet-based education system called Aakash iTutor. Aakash iTutor is a digital solution that provides easy access to recorded video lectures from top Aakash teachers, high-quality eBooks, assessments, quizzes as well as our flagship AIATS (All India Aakash Test Series). Students can also get video lectures and study material on memory chips, or opt for a Lenovo tablet loaded with the same, or access the material online and get immediate access to it on purchase through secure payment gateway integration.

What are the challenges faced in implementing new technologies?

The major challenges we are facing relate to new technology integration for user training, acceptance and proper implementation across all our branches and franchise centres. There are also issues related to data security.

Are telecom service providers equipped to meet the specific product requirements of the education sector?

Yes, we have tie-ups with several service providers (like Oracle, TCS, Hexaware, Airtel, Reliance and Samsung) and 90 per cent of our requirements are met by their product solutions.

What are the big technology trends likely in the education sector?

A number of interactive online and offline tools are being developed to modernise the segment. There are three components of technology-enabled modern education. These are digital content, technology platforms and delivery infrastructure. The education sector is becoming completely digitised. The classroom experience will now be available online, with more analytics and accuracy. Given the recent enhancements in technology access as well as the expansion of the broadband landscape, we expect to soon witness a tectonic shift in the way in which education is delivered in this segment.

What is the organisation's telecom and IT blueprint for next year?

Next year, we are going to focus on adding an extra layer of data security architecture and on improving our digital product offerings. We will also work towards establishing disaster recovery mechanisms at different locations on the cloud environment, as well as creating a virtual platform.

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